

Overview

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has launched a [consultation](#) aimed at improving how it assesses and rates health and care providers. This follows a period of significant internal review and external criticism, including findings from Dr Penny Dash, Professor Sir Mike Richards, and the Care Provider Alliance. The consultation outlines a renewed commitment to effective, fair, and transparent regulation.

Purpose of the Consultation

- To rebuild trust and credibility in the CQC's regulatory approach.
- To evolve the assessment framework and methodology based on sector feedback and lessons learned.
- To ensure people receive safe, effective, compassionate, and high-quality care.

Key Proposals

1. **Sector-Specific Assessment Frameworks**
CQC will develop frameworks tailored to the sectors it regulates, ensuring assessments are relevant and meaningful.
2. **Reintroduction of Ratings Characteristics**
These will guide rating decisions across the five key questions (safe, effective, caring, responsive, well-led), offering clarity to providers and the public.
3. **Supporting Questions to Replace Quality Statements**
Inspired by the previous Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs), these will provide more precise indicators of what "good" looks like.
4. **Improved Clarity and Consistency and inspection frequency**
The CQC acknowledges past issues with inconsistent reporting and delayed assessments. The new approach aims to address these with clearer expectations and more timely inspections with 'Routine' inspections taking place every 3 – 5 years and 'Rapid' inspections focusing on risk.
5. **Adaptability to New Models of Care**
The framework will be responsive to integrated care models and innovations such as neighbourhood health services and digital transformation.
6. **Use of experts by experience and specialist advisors**
A return to using experts by experience and specialist advisors to support inspector judgements.
7. **Data-Driven Judgements**
Emphasis will be placed on using current data and insights to inform regulatory decisions, ensuring assessments reflect the latest evidence.

Leadership and Implementation

- Four newly appointed Chief Inspectors will lead the development of the sector-specific approaches, bringing specialist knowledge and experience.
- The CQC commits to co-production with providers, the public, and stakeholders to shape the new framework collaboratively.

Purpose of the Equality and Human Rights section

This section highlights the CQC's proposals to support fair, inclusive care that doesn't disadvantage people with protected characteristics.

A [draft equality and human rights impact assessment](#) has been produced to ensure that all regulatory proposals:

- Identify and assess potential impacts and risks on specific groups of people.
- Promote fairness and inclusivity in care delivery and regulation.
- Highlight and encourage good or outstanding practices that lead to more equitable access, experience, or outcomes.

IHPN View

We welcome the direction of travel signalled in the consultation however to move towards robust, fair, proportionate and consistent regulation there are a number of areas that need more explanation. These include the frequency of routine inspections for requires improvement/inadequate services, the approach to registration and inspection following registration, the approach to enforcement as some examples. It will be important that the breadth of independent sector providers respond to the consultation both as individual organisations and as a sector.

Engagement and Next Steps

- The consultation is open until **8 December 2025**.
- The IHPN member survey which can be found [here](#) and is open until **14 November 2025**.
- Members are encouraged to respond to both CQC and IHPN and participate in engagement activities.
- IHPN will share the sector response in early December.

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21 October 2025